



oil painting -  
5 - 7 feet

# Lincoln Entering Richmond, April 4, 1865

(Leigh Leslie.)

Thomas Nast has immortalized this, one of the last great historic scenes in which Lincoln was a central figure, in a painting which he recently finished in his studio at Morristown. "Lincoln Entering Richmond" is unquestionably the best thing that has yet come from the hand of this great painter. Mr. Nast lavished much time and patient care upon this painting, and in it he has left an enduring monument to his genius. It is fine in color, superb in drawing, graceful in composition, and remarkable for realistic truth, for vigorous individuality, and for strong power of action.

The grouping is simple, yet highly dramatic. Lincoln wears a plain suit of black, and a high silk hat of the style of the period, and his tall form towers above the escort and the rabble surrounding him. His homely lips are tightly closed, and there is in his luminous eye a shade of sadness. His little son, trembling, clings to his left hand. The negroes have broken through the line of marines and are massed about him. Men, women and children, with the light of love and gratitude in their eyes, jostle one another in their eagerness to grasp his hand, or even to touch the hem of his garment. A mother with her babe clinging to her breast is kneeling and kissing his hand; another, smiling and happy, raises her little one above her head that it may see his benevolent face. Men who have grown stooped and tottering, and gray under the lash of cruel masters, become young, and strong, and brave again at sight of him.

What a sublime thing is joy in a heart that has known naught but despair! What a glorious thing is the light of liberty in a soul that has known the blackness of bondage!

What a beautiful spectacle is that of this black-skinned mother kissing the hand that has struck the shackles of slavery from the limbs of her child! How inspiring to see these husbands and fathers stretching out their toil-worn hands to touch the garment of their benefactor! These faces upon which have long rested the shadows of fear and suffering are now radiant with love and hope.

In the background we see a face of different aspect—a white face, frowning, disdainful, threatening. The picture would not be complete without it. It is that of an ex-slaveholder. To him Lincoln is a

monster, and these black creatures, whom he was wont to buy and sell under the protection of the law, are little better than the dogs that bark at their heels. These women who have felt the grace of maternity; these men who love their wives and children; these chaste, prattling babes with dimpled hands and bright, wondering eyes—to him these human beings have no right to think, no right to love, no right to aspire, no right to stand erect, no right to do aught but labor, cinge, and suffer. He hates them, and he hates the noble soul to whom they offer tribute of affection and gratitude.

This idea Mr. Nast pondered, and it quickly took possession of his mind. He pictured to himself that scene at Richmond; that figure of the century walking through the dusty streets of the proud but fallen capital surrounded by joyous, shouting men, women and children of the race he had liberated. An inspiration came to him. There was poetry, sublimity, immortality in that scene, and his whole soul thrilled as he contemplated it. Mr. Nast took up his brush with enthusiasm. The subject was worthy the best efforts of a Michael Angelo, and the painter worked eagerly, tenderly, reverently. He had known Lincoln intimately, and as vividly as if he had posed for him in his studio did he draw the tall, ungainly figure, and the kindly, care worn, homely face of the Martyr President. One must needs see this splendid creation to appreciate the real flavor of the artist's genius. Mr. Nast has done other excellent paintings of historical association, but none of his earlier works equals this latest one in conception or in finish. As draughtsman, colorist, and master of graceful composition his reputation is by this performance made secure for all coming time.

(From Coffin's "Four Years of Fighting.")

It was a little past noon when I walked down to the river bank to view the desolation. While there I saw a boat pulled by twelve rowers coming upstream, containing President Lincoln and his little son, Admiral Porter, and three officers. Forty or fifty freedmen—sole possessors of themselves for twenty-four hours—were at work on the bank of the canal, under

the direction of a lieutenant, securing some floating timber; they crowded round the President, forgetting work in their wild joy at beholding the face of the author of the great Emancipation Proclamation. As he approached I said to a colored woman—

"There is the man who made you free."

"What, massa?"

"That is President Lincoln."

"Dat President Linkum?"

"Yes."

She gazed at him a moment in amazement, joy, rapture, as if in supernatural presence, then clapped her hands, jumped and shouted, "Glory! glory! glory!"

"God Bless you, Sah!" said one, taking off his cap and bowing very low.

"Hurrah! hurrah! President Linkum hab come! President Linkum hab come!" rang through the street.

The lieutenant found himself without men. What cared those freedmen, fresh from the house of bondage, for floating timber or military commands? Their deliverer had come, he who next to the Lord Jesus was their best friend! It was not a hurrah that they gave so much as a wild, jubilant cry of inexpressible joy.

They pressed round the President, ran ahead, and hovered upon the flanks and rear of the little company. Men, women, and children joined the constantly increasing throng. They came from all the streets running in breathless haste, shouting and hailing, and dancing with delight. The men threw up their hats, the women waved their bonnets and handkerchiefs, clapped their hands, and shouted, "Glory to God! glory! glory! glory!"—rendering all the praise to God, who had given them freedom, after long years of weary waiting and had permitted them thus unexpectedly to meet their great benefactor.

"I thank you, dear Jesus, that I behold President Linkum!" was the exclamation of a woman who stood upon the threshold of her humble home, and with streaming eyes and clasped hands, gave thanks aloud to the Saviour of men.

Another, more demonstrative, was jumping and swinging her arms, crying, "Bless de Lord! Bless de Lord! Bless de Lord!" as if there could be no end of her thankfulness.

No carriage was to be had, so the President, leading his son, walked to General Weitzel's headquarters—Jeff Davis's mansion. Six sailors, wearing their round blue caps and short jackets and baggy pants, with navy cut-throats, formed the guard. Next came the President and Admiral Porter, flanked by the officers accompanying him, and the writer, then six more sailors with cut-throats, twenty of us in all.

## (From Admiral Porter's "Anecdotes of the Civil War.")

The current was now rushing past us over and among rocks, on one of which we finally struck.

"Send for Colonel Bailey," said the President; "he will get you out of this."

"No, sir, we don't want Colonel Bailey this time. I can manage it." So I backed out and pointed for the nearest landing.

There was a small house on this landing, and behind it were some twelve negroes digging with spades. The leader of them was an old man sixty years of age. He raised himself to an upright position as we landed, and put his hands up to his eyes. Then he dropped his spade and sprang forward. "Bless de Lord," he said, "dere is de great Messiah! I knowed him as soon as I seed him. He's bin in my heart fo' long years, an' he's cum at las' to free his chillun from deir bondage! Glory, Halle-luiah!" And he fell upon his knees before the President and kissed his feet. The others followed his example, and in a minute Mr. Lincoln was surrounded by these people, who had treasured up the recollection of him caught from a photograph, and had looked up to him for four years as the one who was to lead them out of captivity.

It was a touching sight, a dazed negro kneeling at the feet of the tall, gaunt looking man who seemed in himself to be bearing all the grief of the nation, and whose sad face seemed to say "I suffer for you all, but will do all I can to help you."

Mr. Lincoln looked down on the poor creature at his feet; he was much embarrassed at his position. "Don't kneel to me," he said. "That is not right. You must kneel to God only, and thank him for the liberty you will hereafter enjoy. I am but God's humble instrument, but you may rest assured that as long as I live no one shall put a shackle on your limbs, and you shall have all the rights which God has given to every other free citizen of this Republic."

His face was lit up with a ray of hope as he uttered these words. Though not a handsome man, and ungainly in his person, yet in his enthusiasm he seemed the personification of manly beauty, and that sad face of his looked down in kindness upon these ignorant blacks with a grace that could not be excelled. He really seemed of another world.

All this scene of brief duration, but, though a simple and humble affair, it impressed more than anything of the kind I ever witnessed. What a fine picture that would have made. Mr. Lincoln landing from a ship of war's boat, an aged negro on his knees at his feet, and a dozen more trying to reach him to kiss the hem



of his garment! In the foreground should be the shackles he had broken when he issued his proclamation giving liberty to the slave.

Twenty years have passed since that event: it is almost too new in history to make a great impression, but the time will come when it will loom up as one of the greatest of man's achievements, and the name of Abraham Lincoln—who of his own will struck the shackles from the limbs of four millions of people—will be honored thousands of years from now as man's name was never honored before.

It was a minute or two before I could get the negroes to rise and leave the President. The scene was so touching I hated to disturb it, yet we could not stay there all day; we had to move on; so I requested the patriarch to withdraw from about the President with his companions and let us pass on.

"Yes, Massa," said the old man, "but after bein' so many years in de desert without water, it's mighty pleasant to be lookin' at las' on our spring of life. 'Sense us, sir, we means no disrespect' to Mass' Lincoln; we means all love and gratitude." And then, joining hands together in a ring, the negroes sang the following hymn with melodious and toning voices only possessed by the negroes of the South:

"Oh, all ye people clap your hands,

And with triumphant voices sing:

No force the mighty power withstands  
Of God, the universal King."

The President and all of us listened respectfully while the hymn was being sung. Four minutes at most had passed away since we first landed at a point, where, as far as the eye could reach, the streets were entirely deserted, but now what a different scene appeared as that hymn went forth from the negroes' lips! The streets seemed to be suddenly alive with the colored race. They seemed to spring from the earth. They came, tumbling and shouting, from over the hills and from the water-side, where no one was seen as we had passed.

The crowd immediately became very oppressive. We needed our marines to keep them off.

I ordered twelve of the boat's crew to fix bayonets to their rifles and to surround the President, all of which was quickly done; but the crowd poured in so fearfully that I thought we all stood a chance of being crushed to death.

I now realized the imprudence of landing without a large body of marines, and yet this seemed to me, after all, the fittest way for Mr. Lincoln to come among the people

he had redeemed from bondage.

What an ovation he had to be sure, from those so-called ignorant beings! They all had their souls in their eyes, and I don't think I ever looked upon a scene where there were so many passionately happy faces.

While some were rushing forward to try and touch the man they had talked of and dreamed of for four long years, others stood off a little way and looked on in awe and wonder. Others turned somersaults, and many yelled for joy. Half of them acted as though demented, and could find no way of testify their delight.

They had been made to believe that they never would gain their liberty, and here they were brought face to face with it when least expected. It was as a beautiful toy unexpectedly given to a child after months of hopeless longing on its part; it was such joy as never kills, but animates the dullest class of humanity.

But we could not stay there all day looking at this happy mass of people; the crowds and their yells were increasing and in a short time we would be unable to move at all. The negroes, in their ecstasy, could not be made to understand that they were detaining the President; they looked upon him as belonging to them, and that he had come to put the crowning act to the great work he had commenced. They would not feel they were free in reality until they heard it from his own lips.

At length he spoke. He could not move for the mass of people—he had to do something.

"My poor friends," he said, "you are free—free as air. You can cast off the name of slave and trample upon it; it will come to you no more. Liberty is your birthright. God gave it to you as he gave it to others, and it is a sin that you have been deprived of it for so many years. But you must try to deserve this priceless boon. Let the world see that you merit it, and are able to maintain it by your good works. Don't let your joy carry you into excesses. Learn the laws and obey them; obey God's commandments and thank him for giving you liberty, for to him you owe all things. There, now, let me pass on. I have but little time to spare. I want to see the capital, and must return at once to Washington to secure to you that liberty which you seem to prize so highly."

The crowd shouted and screeched as if they would split the firmament, though while the President was speaking you might have heard a pin drop. I don't think any one could do justice to that scene.